

Roundtable: Social and Political History

Ferdinando Fasce*

Stefano Luconi†

Cristina Bon‡

Published: November 10, 2020

Ferdinando Fasce

“An ‘Italian dimension’, which informs and enlivens these studies ... has not been lost with the growing professionalization of the discipline.” On this cautiously optimistic note, in the mid-1980s, Tiziano Bonazzi closed his overview of U.S. history studies in the peninsula, which was presented at one of the earliest instances where the call for internationalizing American history was made — Tiziano Bonazzi, “American History: The View from Italy,” *Reviews in American History*, 4 (1986), 537-8. Thirty-five years later, in spite of all the past and present difficulties recently chronicled by Bonazzi himself — Tiziano Bonazzi, “Giorgio Spini e l’inizio degli studi di storia statunitense in Italia,” *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli*, 1 (2020), 51-8 — that “dimension” still seems alive and well, as the two papers under discussion amply testify. The respective stages of the inquiry place them at the two ends of the research spectrum in that Costaguta’s piece is the final result of a long journey that has turned into a book to appear in the most prestigious American labor history series. Santangeli Valenzani’s paper is an intermediate report on a dissertation still in progress. But they share a laudable impulse with a thorough investigation on fascinating and quite timely topics. Before I continue, though, a full disclosure statement is in order. Having read Costaguta’s dissertation, I can attest to the subtlety and complexity of his research, which can hardly find room within the limits of a short paper. Thus, in his case, I have found it more convenient to focus on a few broad comments, which, I hope, may give justice to this truly pioneering work.

To start with, the paper invites a widening of the lens beyond the Socialist camp within which Costaguta so deftly moves, to the wider world of the American left and of the forces that coexisted, in a rather competitive and often utterly divisive way, with the Socialists. Costaguta’s paper reminds us how little we know about the racial attitudes of the anarchists and the Knights of Labor in the 1880s. Regarding the former, in spite of recent, important work, such as Kenyon Zimmer’s tour de force on the turn-of-the-century era (*Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America*,

* University of Genova (Italy); ✉ ferdinandofasce@gmail.com

† University of Padova (Italy); ✉ stefano.luconi@unipd.it

‡ University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italy); ✉ cristina.bon@unicatt.it

University of Illinois Press, 2015), when it gets to that crucial decade, it seems that we have not moved much beyond Bruce Nelson's fleeting remark, according to which Chicago's anarchists' positions on anti-Chinese activity and towards American blacks "remained ambiguous" (*Beyond the Martyrs. A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870–1900*, Rutgers University Press, 1988, 171). Thanks to recent efforts by Rob Weir and Steven Parfitt, the picture of the KOL's racial orientations is now definitely less murky. But it is still a far cry from the depth and thoroughness achieved by Costaguta regarding the Socialist world.

Especially remarkable is how Costaguta traces the shift from scientific racialism to 'colorblind socialism' around 1890 and its attendant mixed legacy for the Socialist camp. Rightly he emphasizes how this came about "mostly as a consequence of the influential leadership of Daniel De Leon." But I am sure in the forthcoming book he will deal at great length with the late 1880's dramatic labor's demise that, as Richard Ostreicher and Richard Schneirov have shown, helps explain the transition. Likewise, the book will confirm Costaguta as one of the scholars who in recent times have most contributed to cast light on the ever elusive figure of De Leon (see his "Marxismo, Identità, Nazione: la Vita e il Pensiero di Daniel De Leon" in Pierpaolo Poggio, ed., *L'Altronovecento: Comunismo Eretico e Pensiero Critico*, Jaca Book, 2013). Which brings me to the final point that makes this study so timely in the long shadow of these past months' racial and class uprisings. Going through this paper, it seems about time that, no matter how limited and flawed they may look today, these early Gilded Age efforts at grappling with the nexus of class and race become part and parcel of a new, more comprehensive history of the U.S. public sphere, and one capable, at long last, of moving beyond the "magic circle" of the all-pervasive "liberal tradition."

Our times of *staycations* in the age of COVID-19 make Santangeli Valenzani's paper, by contrast, all the more interesting. Well-designed and efficaciously exposed, his research promises to break new ground at the intersection of three remarkable sub-fields of cultural history such as the 1970s, Southern identity, and the history of tourism that have witnessed a particularly rich development over the past three decades. In light of tourism scholarship and its increasing attention to the concrete dynamics between actors and structures (see, for example, Helen Hefkowitz Horowitz, *A Taste for Provence*, University of Chicago Press, 2016), a first issue that the paper raises concerns the need for a better assessment of the different actors involved in the tourist industry, be they private tourist operators, public officers and politicians, publicists or other such professionals. At times, in the thick of the reconstruction, within such a limited space, this reader has lost track of the roles, cultural orientations and intentions of those actors, as well as their relations among themselves and towards the public at large.

Speaking of the public, a second question that comes to mind is whether, in the course of the further development of his work, the author plans to pay some attention to what we might call, to paraphrase Michael Kammen's classic study, the larger "chords of memory" that constitute the cultural backdrop against which the story of tourism advertising in the second half of the 1970s unfolds. I would suggest that the study incorporates the insights stemming from the work on public memory, which includes significant portions on tourism as well, developed from the 1980s and 1990s onwards by such scholars as Kammen, John Bodnar, Michael Frisch, David Glassberg, and David Blight, to name only a few.

Finally, regarding the issue of fragmentation and sub-regionalism, it seems to me that the author should factor in an additional element. This is the extent to which such touristic developments reflected the market segmentation strategy that in the era under consideration came to dominate advertising and marketing theory and practice under any latitude and in all areas of consumer society. Exploring the connections between touristic promotion and the larger world of marketing research, as well as the ensuing forms of identity politics and ethno-racial cultural mobilizations, could probably reap some results, while the fragmentation issue could also profitably be connected to Daniel Rodgers' broader "age of fracture" frame.

In conclusion, in their own peculiar way, across the long stretch that runs from the first Gilded Age Socialists to the second Gilded Age Southern tourist promoters, both papers testify to the persistent freshness and aliveness of U.S. cultural history in our country. There seems to be no better way for honoring our master craftsman in the field Tiziano.

Stefano Luconi

Lorenzo Costaguta and Giuliano Santangeli Valenzani place themselves in a dialectical relationship with Italy's historiographical landscape of the United States. Focusing on the Socialist Labor Party in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the former follows in the footsteps of some Italian scholars who have previously investigated the plight of American socialism, though in different time spans and from diverse perspectives.¹ The latter examines the promotion of tourism in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina from 1976 to 1981. This subject is uncharted territory in Italy, where tourism history surfaced only in the mid-1990s and has then overlooked the United States.² The attention to the relevance of ads for prospective visitors in forging the public perception of the Deep South after the enforcement of racial integration reveals an original approach for U.S.-produced scholarship as well. If, to James J. Kilpatrick, the conservative editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, the Jim-Crow South was "a state of mind" that had "to be lived and sensed and felt,"³ Santangeli Valenzani suggests that the image of the post-segregation Deep South was a product of Madison Avenue and could be experienced by browsing a glossy magazine or reading a tourism brochure. He, thus, presents further evidence to corroborate James C. Cobb's Hobsbawmesque view that southern identity results mainly from "myth and invention."⁴ Moreover, while Santangeli Valenzani chooses a topic that is fully immersed within U.S. history, Costaguta yields to the call of global studies, making a preliminary contribution to a transatlantic history of socialism in the late nineteenth century.

However, the two articles are not strange bed fellows. Both reveal an interest in race-related issues, which is another deep-rooted field of research in U.S. history in Italy.⁵ Costaguta examines how racial thinking shaped the early stages of American socialism and identifies two conflicting positions within the Socialist Labor Party. "Scientific racialism," which acknowledged the significance of racial divisions and admitted a hierarchy of races, predominated until 1890, when "colorblind internationalism" prevailed, contending that race played second fiddle to class in labor struggles. Therefore, Costaguta's forthcoming book, more than the present essay, promises to detail how Curaçao-born Daniel De Leon's view of "the plight of the Negro as essentially a class issue," to quote David Herreshoff,⁶ overcame German immigrant socialists' notion of "scientific racialism." Instead, Santangeli Valenzani deals with the exploitation of black heritage to lure African-American visitors from other sections of the country, as tourism promoters stressed, for instance, that Alabama had been the cradle of the Civil Rights movement.

The articles also share a common approach in which actual African Americans remain in the background. Costaguta investigates how members of German extraction debated the tensions between race and class within the Socialist Labor Party. He discloses that his forthcoming book will include Peter H. Clark, the so-called "America's first black socialist."⁷ But his essay does not scrutinize African Americans' participation in that conversation. It only hints that the eventual class-first outcome of the discussion curbed the following of socialism among blacks. Similarly, Santangeli Valenzani points out

1. See, e.g., Arnaldo Testi, *Il socialismo americano nell'età progressista: Il Social-Democratic Party del Wisconsin, 1900–1920*. Venezia: Marsilio, 1980; Arnaldo Testi, "Once Again: Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?," *Storia Nordamericana*, 1 (1990): 59–92; Elisabetta Vezzosi, *Il socialismo indifferente: Immigrati italiani e Socialist Party negli Stati Uniti del primo Novecento*. Roma: Edizioni Lavoro, 1991; Corso Paolo Boccia, *New Deal e lotte operaie: Il Socialist Party of America negli anni Trenta*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1993.
2. Patrizia Battilani et al., "Teaching Tourism History," *Journal of Tourism History*, 1 (2016): 59–60.
3. James J. Kilpatrick, *The Sovereign States: Notes of a Citizen of Virginia*. Chicago: Regnery, 1957, 258.
4. James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 316.
5. See, e.g., Loretta Valtz Mannucci, *I negri americani dalla depressione al dopoguerra*. Milano: Feltrinelli 1974; Ellen Ginzburg Migliorino, *La marcia immobile: Storia dei neri americani dal 1870 al 1970*. Milano: Selene, 1994; Nadia Venturini, *Con gli occhi fissi alla meta: Il movimento afro-americano per i diritti civili, 1940–1965*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010; Antonio Soggia, *La nostra parte per noi stessi: I medici afro-americani tra razzismo, politica e riforme sanitarie 1945–1968*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2012; Nadia Venturini, *La strada per Selma: La mobilitazione afro-americana e il Voting Rights Act del 1965*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2015.
6. David Herreshoff, *The Origins of American Marxism: From the Transcendentalists to De Leon*. New York: Monad, 1973, 159.
7. Nikki Marie Taylor, *America's First Black Socialist: The Radical Life of Peter H. Clark*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013.

that magazines for African Americans carried ads encouraging black tourists to visit the Deep South. Yet, he overlooks African-American holiday-makers' response to both those stimuli and tourism officials' narratives of the Civil War and the black freedom struggle in Dixie.⁸ One also wonders whether the targets of the campaigns for black tourists were primarily the protagonists of the great migration who wished to assess the extent of racial changes in the Deep South. In addition, Santangeli Valenzani observes that the 1970s brought African Americans' initial endeavors for the removal of Confederate symbols with their racist overtones. Therefore, as South Carolina's legislature furled the Confederate battle flag from atop the state Capitol under the threat of a tourism boycott by the NAACP in 2000,⁹ prospective black visitors' previous resort to the power of the purse to support such campaigns could deserve future consideration. Given the emphasis on marketing segmentation, one would expect an analysis of Mississippi blues tourism and an interpretation of why it attracted more whites than African-American visitors. Indeed, this industry started in the late 1970s, with the first Delta Blues and Heritage Festival held in Greenville in 1978 and the opening of the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale the following year, while Mississippi resorted to blues tourism as a public relations operation to heal the wounds of segregation and to dispel negative images of the state as the cradle of anti-black violence.¹⁰ Santangeli Valenzani's periodization is also debatable, as the "new generation of moderate southern politicians" in the field of race emerged as early as 1970, when Jimmy Carter and John West won the gubernatorial elections in Georgia and South Carolina.¹¹

Costaguta has contended elsewhere that "Current scholarship is driven by an excessive focus on Progressive Era socialism."¹² Yet, a broader time frame than the Gilded Age could produce a more nuanced view of U.S. Socialist thinking on race. If the backdrop of his study is the growth of immigration, the years from 1901 to 1910 marked the peak decade for that inflow. Furthermore, in the early twentieth century, other nationality groups than the German minority debated the interactions of class and race. Italian-American Socialists, for example, were aware that entrepreneurs fomented racial animosities to undermine workers' cohesion and called for class solidarity, deconstructing the artificiality of the divisions between blacks and whites. In 1909 *Il Proletario* argued that "the producers must unify against the exploiters of their product. The struggle isn't about race, but class."¹³

At that time, *Il Proletario* was the mouthpiece of the Italian Socialist Federation of North America, an independent organization. But, when the newspaper was established in 1896 with Paolo Mazzoli as its editor, it was affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party, from which it seceded in 1902. Like Mazzoli, most Italian Socialists who landed in the United States in the 1890s joined the Socialist Labor Party.¹⁴ Thus, it would be possible to compare their stand on race with that of the members from Germany. Italian-American socialists could offer an insightful case study. A few left Italy in the wake of the 1894 crackdown on the Sicilian *fasci*. Those who settled in southern cities such as Houston and Tampa not only had opportunities to debate race but also became racialized subjects on the grounds that people from the *Meridione* held some middle ground between whites and blacks, following the alleged contamination of their blood by contacts with Africans over the centuries.¹⁵

8. The alleged softening of slavery in Charleston by the city's tourism bureau is still a matter of criticism among African Americans. See Tariro Mzezewa and Kim Severson, "Southern City Re-Examines the Roots of Its Charm," *New York Times*, international edition, August 20, 2020, 8.
9. James C. Cobb, *The South and America since World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, 267.
10. Stephen A. King, "Mississippi Blues Tourism: History, Marketing, Strategies, and Tourism Goals," in *Defining the Delta*, ed. Janielle Collins. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2016, 203-216.
11. Randy Sanders, *Mighty Peculiar Elections. The New South Gubernatorial Elections of 1970 and the Changing Politics of Race*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.
12. Lorenzo Costaguta "'Geographies of People': Scientific Racialism and Labor Internationalism in Gilded Age American Socialism," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 2 (2019): 200.
13. "Il Proletario" as quoted in Salvatore Salerno, "Paterson's Italian Anarchist Silk Workers and the Politics of Race," *Journal of Labor and Society*, 5 (2005): 620.
14. Anna Maria Martellone, "Per una storia della Sinistra italiana negli Stati Uniti: Riformismo e sindacalismo, 1880-1911," in *Il movimento migratorio italiano dall'unità nazionale ai giorni nostri*, ed. Franca Assante. Geneva: Droz, 1978, 184-5.
15. Malcolm Sylvers, "Sicilian Socialists in Houston, Texas, 1896-1898," in Rudolph J. Vecoli et al., *Gli italiani negli Stati Uniti*. Firenze: Istituto di Studi Americani, 1972, 383-8; Gary Ross Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor*

As these comments are written after Barack Obama outmaneuvered Bernie Sanders to let Joe Biden secure the Democratic nomination for president and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez received only 90 seconds to speak at the Democratic national convention, it is heartening that interest in the history of U.S. socialism is still alive and that a skilled scholar from Matteo Renzi's land, working in Tony Blair's country, probed its origins. It is similarly encouraging that another promising historian looked into such a little-explored territory as the promotion of tourism in the post-segregation Deep South. Even if only Costaguta's essay falls within the realm of intellectual and political history, both articles are up to the scholarship that Tiziano Bonazzi has superbly contributed to developing in Italy.

City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885–1985. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Cristina Bon

In the past thirty years, from the end of the Cold War up to present times, American studies undertaken by Italian scholars have entered an extremely prolific stage, due to the quantity of “opportunities for conversation and joint projects available to and actively promoted by Italian Americanists since the 1990s.”¹⁶ In this period of time, Italian scholarship has not only expanded, but also improved in the quality and amount of topics addressed: in particular, from the Revolution and Civil War Studies, to migration and international relations studies, each field pays increasing attention to the issues of race, gender, and labor. Besides, differently from its beginnings, the greatest part of American historical studies today is meant for an audience of international scholars and readers.

The two papers included in the panel dedicated to the Social and Political History of United States are a clear example of the status reached today by American studies in Italy, whose leading representative, as well as guiding mentor, is professor Tiziano Bonazzi. It is thanks to the hard work made by various generations of scholars like professor Bonazzi that, in half a century, the American studies have improved in the Italian academic environment. Indeed, considering both of the topics addressed, the literature relied upon, and the way the two young scholars place their respective works within the discipline, you can tell that both authors have a solid academic background in American historical studies which stem from the Italian university system and, in the case of Lorenzo Costaguta, in the past years was consolidated through a proficient experience abroad — as PhD students first, and now as lecturer in prestigious English campuses.

Of course, the two essays speak of two research projects at opposite stages. The one by Lorenzo Costaguta is clearly the presentation of an incoming book that, after reading the paper, all of us can't wait to enjoy, while Giuliano Santangelo Valenzani intrigues us with a brand-new project with great potential. Even though each study is mainly focused on political and social topics, both of them are inspired by cultural history, a branch of study that, in the last decades, has attracted many scholars in the realm of US historical studies, producing a good deal of narratives which are contributing to rewriting American history from different perspectives.¹⁷ The importance played by the history of thought and collective imagery, as well as the search for new categories and concepts to address the past, is clearly present in both the works and proves the impact left by the cultural turn on American studies, which both the authors have fully embedded in their respective papers. Like their forerunners, Costaguta and Valenzani's works aim at “transform our sense of the [American] past.”¹⁸

Lorenzo Costaguta's paper consists of a historiographical premise of an incoming book (*The Origins of Colorblind Socialism: Race and Class in the American Left, 1876–1899*) about the relation between class conflicts and racial inequalities according to the Marxist doctrine, as it was discussed by the major labor associations and unions in the American Gilded Age. The bigger research project behind the paper is thus positioned at the intersection of different fields of study: history of labor, racial history, black American history and history of thought. In particular, the project follows a widespread trend in U.S. History: that of intertwining different levels of analysis in order to offer a sophisticated, original and complex picture of the national history. In this respect, Costaguta's endeavor reminds of a recent and valuable monograph by Daniel Immerwahr, who reads the History of U.S. continental and international expansion through the lens of race.¹⁹ Indeed, Costaguta places at the center of his analysis the category of race, a concept that, from the second half of the 20th Century up to present

16. One of the most exhaustive and recent overviews of the main trend of American history in Italy from the end of the Second World War to the present times is due to Ferdinando Fasce, “Fifty Years On. Italian Historians of the United States and Italian History, Culture, and Public Life, 1960–2010,” *Storia della Storiografia. Rivista Internazionale*, 2 (2016): 43–71, 60.

17. Just to stake to Italian scholars inspired by the American cultural turn we can mention Simone Cinotto, Ferdinando Fasce, Alessandra Lorini, Marco Mariano, Arnaldo Testi, Antonio Soggia.

18. James W. Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman, Michael O'Malley, eds., *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present and Future*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008, 3.

19. “Race has not only shaped lives, it's shaped the country itself — where the borders went, who has counted as ‘American.’” Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide and Empire. A Short History fo the Geater United States*. New York, Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2019, 12

times has become increasingly central in the U.S. history.²⁰

The starting point of the work is one of the most crucial questions of US history: why is there no socialism in the US? Formulated by William Sombart in 1906, in the past century this famous question has been at the core of a plethora of studies, all animated by the claim of solving the conundrum. Scholars who tried to answer the question have divided between those which explained the failure of socialism in the US and those, on the opposite side, who showed that socialism had an important impact on US society. Instead of diving into this historiographic duel, Costaguta firmly refuses its very premise and, like other scholars — in particular Eric Foner and Leon Fink — considers Sombart's question itself misleading. According to Costaguta the point is not that of proving the existence or absence of socialism in the US, rather to “understand the significance of the American radical world, including the socialist, in its own terms and with its own features.” Among the peculiar features of the American leftist radicalism, the author singles out “the multi-ethnic and multiracial composition of the American working class.” In particular, the specific interest and aim of the author is that of investigating how the socialist movement attempted at “resolv[ing] the tensions between race, class and ethnicity during the Gilded Age” and up to the Progressive Age.

It is exactly for this reason that Costaguta cannot leave out a deep analysis of the socialist ideas of race and ethnicity, an aspect that contributes to place his work in between labor history and intellectual history. The intellectual analysis comes to the point of coining brand-new expressions to define the two main ideas of race discussed by American socialists in the late 19th Century: “scientific racialism” and “colorblind socialism.” It is important to notice that, in explaining how the latter was the truly original innovation introduced by the American socialism in the discourse on labor and race, Costaguta avoids falling into the trap of exceptionalism, by highlighting the controversial implications of “colorblind socialism.” If, on the side of intellectual analysis, Costaguta's merits are out of discussions, less clear is the contribution — asserted by the author — given by his study in the field of institutional history. In a passage of his paper Costaguta claims to adopt an approach which “combines intellectual and institutional history,” while it is clear his interest in intellectual history, the reasons that would place the project within the realm of institutional history are not properly explained within the paper. Indeed, from the paper we understand that Costaguta's research project is a study of the Socialist thought which follows the development of the American socialist party from 1876 to 1899. Even though a study of the kind must implicitly refer to the political and institutional context of the Gilded and Progressive Age, from the presentation given by the author there are no clues as to the institutional issues treated in the book, such as the socialist involvement in local, state and federal elections or the socialist impact on local, state and federal decision making processes.

Among all the labor movements and organizations founded in the late 19th Century, Costaguta singles out the Socialist Labor Party as the only one deserving true interest, since it was the only movement to care for class struggle and to address the racial question. Within the SLP, Costaguta analyses in particular the literature produced by German Immigrants — made of German-language socialist local papers — stating that in the period of time considered “American socialism was thought, spoken and written almost entirely in German.” Any attempt of assessing the specific choices made by the author in terms of the main subject of analysis (Germans members of the SLP) and primary sources is definitely beyond my reach. For sure, the idea of focusing on German socialists opens the research project to the transnational approach - one of the latest trends in Italian American history, whose main aim is that of breaking the boundaries of national histories reconnecting the Western and Eastern shores of the Atlantic in a common narrative. In this respect, in the conclusive part of the paper, Costaguta confesses that his ultimate aim would be actually that of going beyond transnational history. As the author admits, the discourse on the socialist ideas of race discussed in *Colorblind Socialism* is just the first step of a greater and ambitious research that encompasses different historical approaches: comparative, transatlantic and global.

After reading the paper, the only regret is that of waiting for the book to come.

Giuliano Santangeli Valenzani presents to us a research project which ideally builds on Eric Hobs-

20. With particular reference to the black history the impact of race on the US nation-state building has been investigated by authors like W. E.B. Du Bois, Ira Berlin and Eric Foner.

bawm and Benedict Anderson's concepts of nation-state identities as cultural products²¹. At the same time, the subject and the sources he relies upon definitely belong to a postmodern turn in historical studies, which has been increasingly endorsed by American and Italian scholars alike in the last decades (especially if we look to the history of advertising in the US, pioneered in Italy by Ferdinando Fasce and Elisabetta Bini).²² Valenzani's main purpose is that of assessing the Southern regional identity in the Twentieth Century through an analysis of marketing of tourism and, consequently, a specific focus on Tourism advertising from the 1960s to 1980s — a period of time often forgotten by the literature. In pursuing this goal, Valenzani aims also at filling a void in the literature: the lack of a "broader look, a valid analysis of the image that the South offered to tourists beyond the single case of one or more areas or attractions." In particular, Valenzani distinguishes two main trends in the policies over tourist marketing: on the one hand the reliance on a traditional southern identity which stemmed from the Civil War Era and the Lost cause; on the other the need for embracing the changes of the 60s and 70s and promoting a more "amicable version of the old South perfectly fit in the context of the period." According to the author, the old version of the Southern image ended up to be extremely mitigated, up to the point of being "just part of the new variety trope promoted by the states, one theme among the others." Especially in light of the recent bitter conflicts over the US historical heritage that, since 2017, has often resulted in the soiling and knocking down of many statues all over the country, the author's assessment of the use of the confederate imagery in tourist advertising as nothing of consequence would certainly deserve further inquiry.

Valenzani affirms that his main scope would be that of connecting the reshaping of the South tourist image with the equally important transformations in Southern culture and society at a large. In this respect, the paper is indeed full of hints at the way the analysis of South tourist marketing could serve as a springboard to a variety of further intriguing investigations: from the transformations of the American middle class in the 70s to the long-term impact of the Civil Rights movement in the South. There is, however, a critical aspect to remark: the contrast between the main purpose of the author — analyzing the development of Southern identity in Twentieth Century — and the choice of restricting the analysis to the Deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina). In other words, the findings drawn from the analysis of the four case studies are extended to the whole South, as if there were no differences between Upper and Lower South or between Atlantic States and South-Western States. As, over the years, the scholarship on the South has fully demonstrated, the US South should not be conceived as a "monolithic region," rather as a multifaceted and complex reality made up of "many souths," up to the point that we can even find a variety of social and economic contexts within every single State.²³ I think that the author should reflect on this point in order to clarify whether his research means to address only the Deep South, or rather the whole South, and in the latter case, he should maybe diversify the case studies and introduce some level of comparison. Actually, even when the author affirms to focus on the Deep South, he should at least justify the reason of this choice, considering the fact that not all the scholars of American South would place Georgia and South Carolina within the Deep South.²⁴ Indeed, scholars who deal with US Southern History have often disagreed on how to divide the southern region and someone has included in the Deep South just Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Of course, the way of conceiving the South and its

21. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth and Reality*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York, Verso, 1983, 3.

22. Ferdinando Fasce, "Advertising, Public Relations, and Political Communication in the U.S. Since 1939. A Transatlantic Perspective," keynote address, "Information et propagande. Pour une histoire des techniques de création du consensus depuis 1939," (Bruxelles, IEE de l'ULB, 26 mars 2007); Ferdinando Fasce, Elisabetta Bini, "Irresistible Empire or Innocents Abroad? American Advertising Agencies in Post-War Italy, 1950s-1970s," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 1 (2015): 7-30. Since the end of the Twentieth century the reference to new or "alternative sources" — such as lyrics, movies and various kind of images — as evidences to support historical analysis has been fully legitimized by Italian scholars and the interest in culture and media has thrived in Italian historical studies. On this point see Giovanni De Luna, *La passione e la ragione. Fonti e metodi dello storico contemporaneo*. Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 2001, chapter 4.

23. See Peter Kolchin, *A Sphinx on the American Land: The Nineteenth-Century South in Comparative Perspective*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2003, 39.

24. See Adan Rothman, *Slave Country: American expansion and the origins of the Deep South*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2005, x.

inner geographical partitions depends mostly upon the research question. Considering that the main interest of the author is that of inquiring into the Southern identity and the differences between old and new Southern imagery, it would be useful to reflect on potential long term distinctions between the five original Southern Atlantic States (Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia) and the states which joined subsequently the Southern region, due to the annexation of new territories. Ultimately, the need of clarifying and better justifying the geographic areas addressed is, in my opinion, the main challenge to overcome in order to consolidate this very promising research project.

Apart from the single merits of each research project presented in this panel, it is evident that for the multilayered approaches adopted, the attention to transnational and global history, the wish for exploring new sources and carving new concepts and, most of all, the refusal of endorsing the narrative of American exceptionalism, both these studies celebrate the historical legacy of professor Tiziano Bonazzi.